

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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Media Note

Arab Students to Showcase Leadership at MEPI Alumni Conference in Cairo

Approximately 90 students from the Middle East and North Africa who participated in the Middle East Partnership Initiative's (MEPI) 2006 Study of the U.S. Institutes will convene in Cairo, Egypt, from February 3-7 for additional training and to share their experiences and accomplishments since returning home from the six-week program last summer.

Alumni conference participants will create exhibits highlighting their civic project ideas, while expanding their leadership skills and honing project plans through training, networking, and professional development sessions. Examples of projects students have pursued since their U.S. experience include creating a Web site to encourage volunteerism in Egypt; providing computer and English language training to disadvantaged young people in Algeria; and founding a service organization to clean up local communities in the West Bank.

In addition to hearing from prominent civic and business leaders and journalists from the region, the students will speak with U.S. Ambassador to Egypt Frank Ricciardone and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State J. Scott Carpenter.

The young leaders hail from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. During their programs in the U.S., they visited Washington, DC, before traveling to their host institutions: Georgetown University, the University of Delaware, Benedictine University, Montana State University, or Dickinson College.

The MEPI Study of the U.S. Institutes bring outstanding undergraduate students from the Middle East and North Africa to American universities for a challenging academic program, interactive leadership training, and educational travel. The institutes develop students' leadership and civic engagement skills, with a specific emphasis on how to apply those skills to contribute to positive change in their home communities.

The institutes are an education program of the Middle East Partnership Initiative, which supports greater freedom and opportunity for people in the region. The initiative has devoted more than \$293 million in four years to reformers in the region so democracy can spread, education can thrive, economies can grow, and women can be empowered.

For more information, journalists can contact Chad Bettes at (202) 776-8572.

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